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Book Reviews

MURRAY CLARK HAVENS, EDITOR

An Introduction to Metapolitics: A Brief Inquiry into the Conceptual Language of Political Science. By A. JAMES GREGOR. (New York: Free Press, 1971. Pp. xi, 403. $9.95.)

The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy. By EDMUND HUSSERL. Translated, with an Introduction, by DAVID CARR. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970. Pp. xliii, 405. $12.95.)

This review essay treats two quite different sorts of books together in an attempt to clarify the place of methodology in contemporary political science. In the course of a review of the books in question, I shall discuss themes common to both works: crisis, science, philosophy and methodology.

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I. The Crisis of the Scientific State

If a state is in crisis, then knowledge as it is embodied in, or represented by, that state may in consequence also be in crisis; or, if an organized system or tradition of knowledge is in crisis, then the state which represents or interprets itself in terms of that organized system of knowledge may in consequence also be in crisis. It is extremely difficult to find an unprejudiced, workable perspective on the situation, especially if crisis conditions obtain. A perspective which represents itself in a crisis to be a reliable one also seems to imply that, in some respect, there really is no crisis.

Gregor's book, *An Introduction to Metapolitics*, begins with the observation that "the study of politics has entered into crisis," along with "a variety of disciplines [which evince] the same syndrome of pathic traits." "Metapolitics" is the reliable perspective on the crisis, which (as we have seen) means that from the preferred perspective, there really is no crisis: "The principal contention of this book will be, implicitly, that once certain critical concepts are at least moderately well characterized, most of the putative issues dividing parties in the exacerbated debate dissipate themselves; they are in a real sense 'pseudo-problems,' the consequence of linguistic, analytic, conceptual, and procedural confusions." The appearance of crisis—the "pseudo-problems"—is seen to be in part the concomitant of an alterable state of affairs, and in part the consequence of a relatively recent historical development. Gregor is "convinced that political science is an informal discipline," and that in it "political inquiry is pursued, by and large, with the analytic and logical machinery of ordinary language," a condition which persists in the absence of "sustained effort . . . to standardize linguistic usage or systematize theoretical procedures." Moreover, Gregor sees the twentieth century "behavioral revolution" in political science as having upset an "untroubled past" in which "political 'scientists' were conceived to be essentially, if not exclusively, practicing moralists issuing appraisive assessments and prescriptive advice." But even the practice of a scientific political science leaves much confusion, for in political science "at its best," undergraduates take "a rag-bag" of courses and graduate students remain "innocent of any systematic awareness of a community of concerns that sustains political inquiry as a discipline."

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For Gregor, the study of political science is in crisis, but the larger intellectual context is conducive to effective therapy: We live in the "age of analysis," and metapolitics—"metalinguistic talk about the analytic, synthetic, and normative language of political inquiry and politics itself"—can, if pursued, be expected to rectify our crisis, mainly by clarifying for us the procedures of science: "What has been argued is that science is a unique cognitive activity; it is the most reliable method for warranting both empirical and formal truth claims."

Edmund Husserl's last great work, *The Crisis of European Sciences,* was presented in lectures and published installments (in German) during the 1930s. Now it is published in English, and we see that for Husserl the crisis is not confined to a few transitional disciplines:

> A crisis of our sciences as such: can we seriously speak of it? Is not this talk . . . an exaggeration? After all, the crisis of a science indicates nothing less than that its genuine scientific character, the whole manner in which it has set its task and developed a methodology for it, has become questionable. This may be true of philosophy . . . [and psychology]. But how could we speak . . . seriously of a crisis of the sciences in general—that is, also of the positive sciences, including pure mathematics and the exact natural sciences, which we can never cease to admire as models of rigorous and highly successful scientific discipline?

It is plain that Husserl understands—and wishes to be quite clear about—the radical character of his claim, representing as it does a crisis of enormous, virtually all-encompassing scope. "All-encompassing," that is, from the point of view of European humanity (which Husserl construes to include, *e.g.,* England and the United States), which finds a world constructed and interpreted in light of and partly in terms of scientific achievements. How is it possible to find a reliable perspective in such a situation? First, Husserl understands the meaning of modern philosophy ("from within") from Descartes to the present in terms of the "true struggles of our time," namely, "struggles between humanity which has already collapsed and humanity which has its roots but is struggling to keep them or find new ones." The crisis of science is the loss of its meaning for life—a consequence, paradoxically enough, of its own achievements. For philosophers (in this perspective, "functionaries of mankind"), it is necessary to reflect back, "in a thorough *historical* and *critical*

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fashion," in order to provide for a radical self-understanding such that the crisis can be seen in perspective.

Neither Gregor nor Husserl claim in these works to have provided a cook-book or practical guide for surviving crisis; rather, they have attempted to constitute exemplary responses to the crisis they identify, and the question for us is whether we can learn from them: Are they examples of workable perspectives?

II. Natural Science

The "natural" sciences, the "hard" sciences, the "exact" sciences—these constitute a presence with which we must contend, it seems, before we can be very clear about the place of science in our own activities. Husserl attempts to clarify Galileo's original contribution to the activity we now identify as physics, in order that we may understand the "enigma of subjectivity" so central to the crisis of science. Space does not permit a complete recapitulation of the argument, but Husserl pays close attention to what would have occurred to Galileo as "obvious" about nature, in order to clarify the *meaning for subjectivity* (for Galileo) of Galileo's mathematization of nature, that crucial development for modern science. This process of reflecting back produces a complex insight into the invention of a new idea; then we are conducted through the process of the emptying of the meaning of mathematical natural science through "technization."

> Like arithmetic itself, in technically developing its methodology it is drawn into a process of transformation, through which it becomes a sort of *technique*; . . . it becomes a mere art of achieving . . . according to technical rules, results the genuine sense of whose truth can be attained only by concretely intuitive thinking actually directed at the subject matter itself. But now only those modes of thought . . . which are indispensable for a technique as such, are in action.

The original thinking that gives meaning and truth to the correct results is excluded. (Husserl does *not* think the process unnecessary or illegitimate, but that it must be a method practiced in "a fully conscious way." Even more, "it must be freed of the character of an *unquestioned tradition* . . .")

The foregoing (and a great deal more) leads to this formulation of the problem:

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> Are science and its method not like a machine, reliable in accomplishing very useful things, a machine everyone can learn to operate correctly without in the least understanding the inner possibility and necessity of this sort of accomplishment? But was geometry, was science, capable of being designed in advance, like a machine, without an understanding which was, in a similar sense, complete—scientific?

There are "criticisms" aplenty of science today, but most of them are merely anti-science arguments not actually intended to produce understanding. To the extent that Gregor deals with natural science at all it is in response to such anti-science "criticisms." Unfortunately, Gregor deals mostly with straw men—hasty, often preposterous characterizations of some "position"—which he proceeds to destroy with equally bad arguments. (He does try to respond to Thomas Kuhn's argument, but since he fails adequately to reconstruct Kuhn's position, he ends up with the foolish charge that "Kuhn's indisposition to make the necessary distinction between the *logic of discovery* [sic] . . . and the normative and prescriptive *logic of justification* thwarts analysis and confuses issues.") Inevitably, the failure to appreciate the crisis of science as such produces a politicized response in those who experience, nevertheless, the loss of meaning which characterizes the crisis. The almost frenetic verbosity of Gregor's book, the contentiousness, the attacks on unnamed, "pernicious" mystics, and the regrettable omissions from consideration of relevant, contemporary works and approaches (e.g., Wolin on "methodism," Gunnell on "contextualism," phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and the like) are all symptoms of politicization. Indeed, Gregor's book often sounds like (and makes about as much sense as) a campaign speech:

> We do know a great deal more about man's political life and his political behavior today than we did a generation ago. Our future success will be contingent on our ability to effectively employ the corrigible methods of contemporary science, on our ability to refine those methods, and on our capacity to more cognitively assess our needs, aspirations, and conflicting desires. . . . There are no magic formulas nor guarantees of success. There is only the prospect of hard and collaborative enterprise.

III. The Politics of Knowledge

Arnold Brecht argues that the "real crisis" in Western scientific

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theory occurred in the rise of the theoretical opinion that no scientific choice between ultimate values can be made. But I think that a proper reading of Husserl's *Crisis* shows that Brecht's position (which easily subsumes Gregor's) is at least in part the result of methodological error. As we saw above, Husserl identified the crisis of science as its loss of *meaning*; but he did not proceed to erect this observation into a methodological position, superstitiously granting to a "science" (the intuitive meaning of which was, for technical reasons, virtually impossible to apprehend) the status of "objective knowledge" in contradistinction to his own "mere subjectivity." Instead he attempts to clarify what is for functioning subjectivity a critical enigma—whether that subject is a "scientist" or not.

The bulk of the *Crisis* is a pursuit of the complex methodological arguments which must be clarified at every step in the course of reconstructing the meaning of science by Husserl's method. If it were only for the intellectual exhilaration the book affords, it would be, as they say, must reading for the methodologist. But it is more than this. I think; many methodologists will probably find that the *Crisis* makes possible for them thoughts and conversations which would not have occurred without reading it.

Much of what will be talked about and thought about—partly (though by no means exclusively) as a result of Husserl's impact on methodology—during this period of crisis in the study of politics will be indistinguishable from philosophy, or political theory. The more often we find science to be the object of political contention, the more often do we find it necessary to "reflect back . . . to provide . . . *before all decisions,* for a radical self-understanding: . . . into what was . . . always sought in philosophy . . . and which, once seen, apodictically conquers the will."

Even though Husserl never uses the word "politics" in the *Crisis,* it is a book eminently well suited to introduce the student of politics to the most critical problems of the discipline. And from the perspective thus afforded, Gregor's book will appear as a symptom of the crisis of science, rather than a meaningful response to the crisis of political science.

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